

7 King's Cross Street (House)
Christiansted
St. Croix
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-40

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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7 KING'S CROSS STREET (HOUSE)

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Location: 7 King's Cross Street
Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural Interest: An unusual town house consisting of three wings grouped around a court and linked together by an entrance wall. The building represents at least two major periods of construction, as the southwest wing, fronting onto King's Cross Street, differs in architectural character from the rest of the structure.

Condition of Fabric: The general condition is poor. The building is now used as an apartment house for over eight families. The rebuilding, partitioning and alteration have obliterated much of the original character of the building. The wooden members of the construction are termite-infested and the walls are pitted and flaking.

EXTERIOR

Orientation: The U-shaped building fronts onto Queen's Street from the Market Square to the southeast corner of King's Cross Street. The Queen's Street facade is a ten-foot high wall through which two gates are cut. The gates open onto the court around which the three wings are grouped. The wings on the northeast and on the southeast (rear) are one room deep with an arcade and gallery on the court side. The southwest wing is twice as deep and its arcaded facade fronts onto King's Cross Street.

Foundation: The building has a rubble masonry foundation, which articulates with the front wall of the northeast wing by a projecting base, that is visible along the bed of the gutter.

Wall construction: The majority of the building is of stuccoed brick masonry. Facing the court, the masonry rear and northeast wings have two stories of arched, brick galleries. The southwest wing has a wooden framed second floor that is supported on masonry walls and by the arcade on King's Cross Street. Two horizontal bands mark the second story floor line and the roof plate line. The square pillars that carry the arches have capital bands and bases. The second floor galleries have a recessed masonry panelled rail between the pillars. Some of the original archways have been filled. In the rear gallery, only four arches out of five remain open on the second floor and two arches on the first floor, with two open on the second floor northeast gallery and two on the first floor.

The southwest wing varies considerably from the other wings. The first floor on the court has one large arch of twice the span of the arches in the other wings. The remaining bay is blocked by a large flared stairway to the rear wing. The second floor is sheathed and shingled on the southwest, clapboarded on the northeast and northwest. A gabled addition projects out from the rear

wing over the stairway landing. The wall on the northwest or Queen's Street side has a bevelled top which extends under the wooden second floor to the west corner.

Within the court to the south of the main entry is a modern concrete block enclosure which serves as a privy.

Openings: In the rear and northeast wings, all openings have an assortment of sash, all in poor condition. Many windows, doors, and arches have been filled in with fixed louvers and wooden partitions. A majority of exterior windows retain their double board shutters.

On the second floor of the southwest wing, the windows have wooden jalousies and panelled shutters. The store on the first floor has shutters on both doors and windows.

The wooden addition over the court staircase landing has a wood louvered wall. The main gate has a wood lattice infill with the central part acting as a door. The second entry, opposite the grand stairway, has a picket door.

Roof: The rear and northeast wings have flat brick on exposed wood rafters covered with recent wood gable roofs and corrugated metal above the parapet walls. The landing projection and the southwest wing have gabled roofs with corrugated metal roofing. The northeast wing has a parapet wall panelled as the second floor gallery railing.

Chimneys: There is a large chimney in the middle of the northeast face of the northeast wing.

Surface Treatment: The architectural detail is concentrated within the court where the proportions of the galleries and the court are good. The galleries have square piers with moulded bands, capitals and keystones. The masonry railing and remaining portion of the parapet are identical with recessed flat panels. Two courses mark the floor line and plate line. These flat brick bands are carried around to the street facades. The main gate has elaborate capitals and bands on the flanking piers of the simple masonry arch. The second court entry has a heavy entablature with a panel similar to that of the parapet. The capital bands on the piers of the King's Cross Street arcade are less pronounced. All these decorative features are stuccoed as are the walls, but are painted white in contrast to the faded red ochre of the walls.

INTERIOR

Floor plan: The court is surrounded by five bays along the rear and three bays on the northeast. The depth of both these wings are 12' plus 10' for the gallery. The southwest wing measures roughly 30' from court to outer arcade. The galleries have been partitioned off at the front end of the northeast wing and at the southwest end of the rear wing. The two floors are divided into a number of small rooms opening directly onto either the court or gallery.

The southwest wing has a store recess behind its arcade. The second floor plan was undetermined.

Stairways: The major stairway in the south corner of the courtyard is of brick with a cistern under it. The bottom four steps flare out. In the north corner of the court, a recent cast concrete stairs with makeshift banister is superimposed against the front two bays of the northeast wing. At the south end of the King's Cross Street facade in the last bay of the arcade is an enclosed wooden stairway with a door at the bottom of the run.

Floors: The first floor is a makeshift combination of wood and concrete over brick. It is assumed that the second floor is much the same. The southwest wing has a wooden second floor, concrete first floor and 15" square stone tiles under the arcade.

Wall and ceiling finish: The masonry walls are plastered; the wooden partitions are variously treated. The ceilings are wood, either exposed beams, hung plywood or composition board.

OTHERS

General Setting: This town house is situated at the southeast end of the present produce market. The court is paved with brick laid in a herringbone pattern, with no greenery. To the northeast, the building borders directly on a dry gut which cuts across town from the hillside to the harbor.

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